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COUNCIL OF KHALIST CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 1997

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, October 7, 1997, marks a significant occasion in the history of the Sikh Nation. Ten years ago today, the Sikh nation declared its independence and forged the Nation of Khalistan. Led by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, the Council of Khalistan has brought the Sikh struggle for freedom to the attention of world leaders. Dr. Aulakh and the Council of Khalistan should be applauded for their efforts to liberate Khalistan through peaceful, non-violent means.

As you know, the Sikhs had ruled themselves for over 80 years before the British conquered the subcontinent and created the artificial entity called India for their own administrative convenience. At the time of India's independence 50 years ago, the Sikhs joined with India on the promise of Gandhi and Nehru that they would enjoy the glow of freedom, and that no law affecting the Sikhs would be enacted without their consent. Well Mr. Speaker, that promise was soon broken, and no representative of the Sikhs has ever signed India's Constitution.

India cannot survive as one political entity for much longer. In actuality, India is a conglomerate of Nations held together through oppression. It has as many as 18 official languages, and the central government is run by an unstable 13-party coalition. The only remaining question is whether India's inevitable breakup will be peaceful like the Soviet Union's or violent like Yugoslavia's. I join with the leaders of the Khalistani freedom movement in expressing the hope that it will be peaceful. However, if India continues its policy of genocide, it may preclude that possibility.

Since 1984, more than 250,000 Sikhs have been murdered by Indian forces. According to various human rights groups, more than 60,000 police officers received cash bounties for their participation in these murders. According to a 1995 report published by human rights activist, Mr. Jaswant Singh Khaira, at least 25,000 young Sikh men have been abducted, tortured, and killed, then their bodies are declared "unidentified" and finally they are cremated. On September 6, 1995, shortly after this report was published, Mr. Khaira was kidnapped by the police. Over 2 years later, his whereabouts remain a mystery. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Khaira has probably been murdered like so many before him.

Furthermore, India's own Central Bureau of Investigation [CBI] conducted a brief investigation at just one cremation site and was able to confirm about 1,000 mass cremations. Now, the National Human Rights Commission says that it will investigate this brutal policy that Indian's own Supreme Court has called "worse than a genocide." So far, no one has been punished for these murders.

Religious persecution continues in India as well. On September 4, 1997, a Sikh church

was invaded by security forces without a search warrant. Six Granthis, who serve as the guardians and teachers of the Sikh holy scriptures, were subsequently beaten and tortured. Police occupation of the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine, continues to this day. The mayor of a village in Punjab was tortured in front of the people because he is an Amritdhari, or baptized, Sikh. Amritdhari Sikhs are considered a criminal class. Sikhs have been raped, beaten, tortured, and even killed because they would not renounce their religious beliefs. Meanwhile, an expired law that made it illegal to convert a Hindu to any other religion continues to be enforced despite the fact that it has expired.

It is clear from events like this that the Sikhs are a captive nation in the Indian Empire, colonized and enslaved for the benefit of a Brahmin elite that is grossly out of touch with its people, many of whom live in abject poverty. The only real solution is a fully independent Khalistan.

We must end our financial support of tyrants. We need to send strong messages to India, and put a stop to the endless amount of foreign aid we send to them until the repression ends. We should also use our influence as the world's preeminent superpower to affect a vote on freedom for Khalistan, similar to the vote the United States conducts in Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues in this Congress calls India "the largest democracy in the world." Well, if that is true, then what's good for the United States must be good for "the largest democracy in the world." I challenge India to follow the path of democracy, and let the people of Khalistan and all the nations under its occupation choose their own destiny at the ballot box. Only then can India be considered a truly democratic nation.

HONORING SHERMAN SPEARS

HON. RONALD V. DELLUMS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 1997

Mr. DELLUMS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the achievement of one of my constituents, Mr. Sherman Spears. He will be honored on October 14, 1997 as a recipient of the Ameritech Award of Excellence in Crime Prevention on behalf of the National Crime Prevention Council. Out of 140 nominations, Mr. Spears was selected along with eight extraordinary individuals who are fighting crime and building community.

Mr. Spears was shot at the age of 19 and fortunate to have survived. The incident, which left him a paraplegic, motivated him to dedicate his life to doing what he can to help at-risk young people make choices to keep themselves and others alive, and to teach them how to build safer communities. Since 1993, he has been the coordinator of Teens on Target, a youth violence prevention program in my hometown of Oakland, CA. He began the Caught in the Crossfire hospital peer visitation program in 1994.

Mr. Spears used his experience and understanding to develop the Caught in the Crossfire program. This program provides adolescents, who are recovering from violent injuries in the Highland Hospital trauma center, with educational materials about violent crime to

dissuade victims and their friends from retaliating against their attackers. Upon discharge, Mr. Spears contacts the patients to see if they have used the referrals given to them, such as joining a program to help them get their GED, changing friendship groups, or joining and attending a physical rehabilitation program.

Caught in the Crossfire provides visitation to all recovering adolescents who are referred by the Highland Hospital staff. This averages 50 visits per year. The average length of hospital stay of each patient is 2-3 days; Mr. Spears responds to the call for help within 24 hours.

Teens on Target approaches at-risk youth in an attempt to reform their perspectives and to help them understand the repercussions of violence. The program trains multiethnic urban youth to educate their peers about the causes of violence and how to prevent it at home, in their neighborhood, and in their city. Each year, 25 youth from two high schools in Oakland are trained by Mr. Spears to: First, provide peer violence prevention education at schools, conferences and community events; second, educate professionals on the impact of violence on youth and strategies for prevention that will work; third, provide an informed voice to the media about how youth can be leaders in preventing violence; fourth, provide positive role models for youth; and fifth, provoke policy makers to take action to prevent violence. The youth, at risk for dropping out of school themselves, are referred to Teens on Target by probation officers, principals, counselors, and teachers. They provide four interactive violence prevention workshops to approximately 2,000 youth per year addressing the issues of gun violence, street and gang violence, alcohol and drug violence, and family violence. Over 5,000 youth have received this training since Mr. Spears has coordinated the project.

I would like to thank the National Crime Prevention Council and Ameritech for their commitment in helping individuals fight crime and build community, and for recognizing and honoring the work of Mr. Spears and others.

Sherman Spears did not let his experience with violence become an excuse for defeat. He has not allowed the physical difficulties resulting from that incident to keep him from making a contribution to his community. Instead, he has used his unique insight to create programs to address crime throughout Oakland. We, in Oakland, are fortunate and proud to have Mr. Spears working on the front lines, to help break the vicious cycle of violence. Thank you so much for your commitment and work on our behalf. I also ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Sherman Spears and hardworking individuals like him who make a difference in their communities.

AMERICAN TEACHERS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA HELP DEVELOP SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND FREE ELECTIONS

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 8, 1997

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Doug Phillips of Anchorage, AK, who participated in CIVITAS at